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ABSTRACT

Designed to be used before and after attending a performance of the musical play "The Very First Family" (in which a Stone Age family and their neighbors bring three of Rudyard Kipling's stories to life), this cue sheet for teachers presents information about the performance and suggests classroom activities. The activities in the cue sheet involve young people in creative thinking, accommodating differing learning styles, and draw connections to various parts of the curriculum. The cue sheet discusses what the play is about, things to look for and listen for during the performance, biographical information on Rudyard Kipling, problems to solve, discussion questions, tips for being a good audience member, and a letter to parents about the performance. The cue sheet folds out into a large poster-sized play map (not included here because of size). (RS)

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CUE SHEET For Teachers

THE VERY FIRST FAMILY

A MUSICAL PLAY BY PHILIP HALL
BASED ON STORIES BY RUDYARD KIPLING

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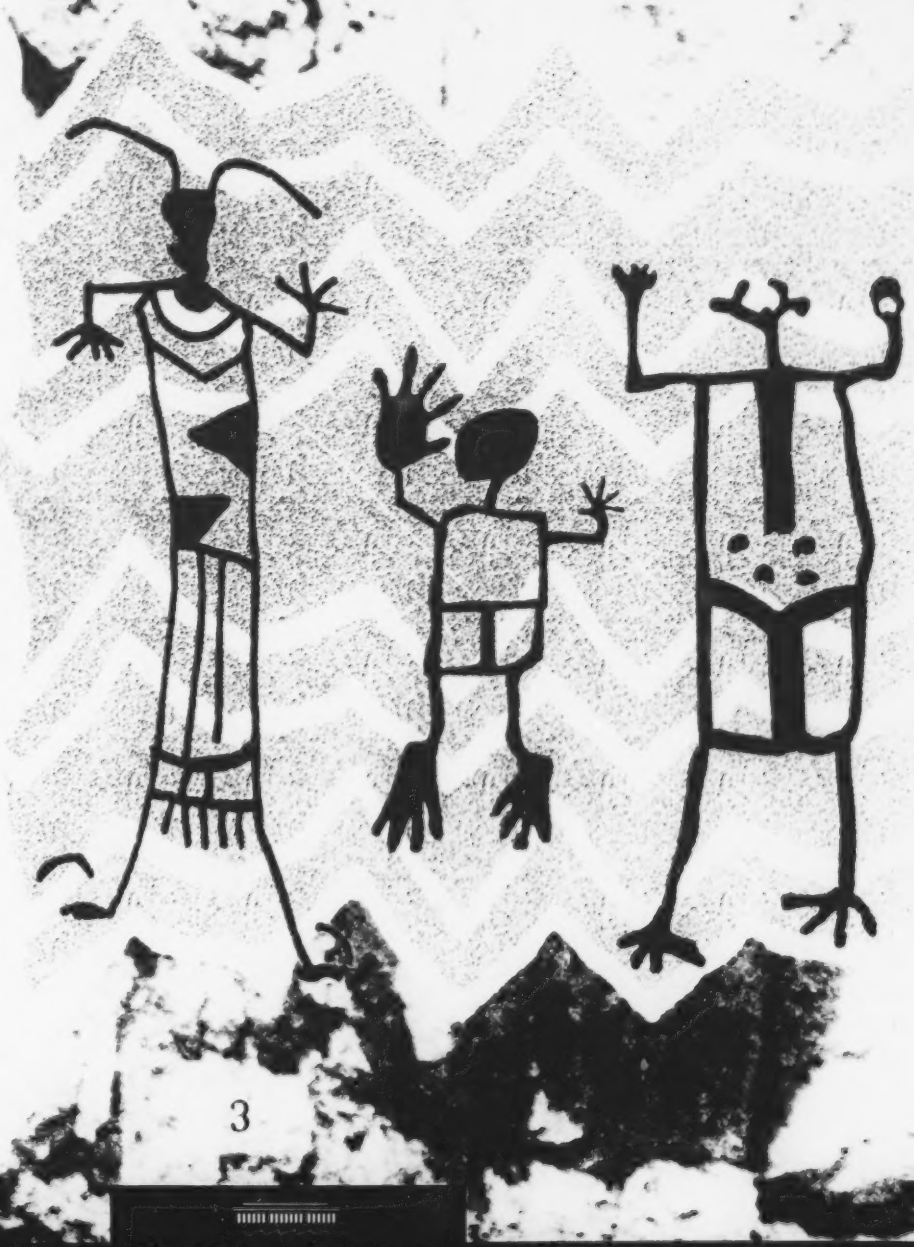
CUE SHEET
For Teachers

THE VERY FIRST FAMILY

A MUSICAL PLAY BY PHILIP HALL
BASED ON STORIES BY RUDYARD KIPLING



Welcome to *Cuesheet*, one of a series of performance guides published by the Education Department of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C. This *Cuesheet* is designed to be used before and after attending a performance of *The Very First Family*. The activities involve young people in creative thinking, accommodate differing learning styles, and draw connections to various parts of the curriculum. While this *Cuesheet* has been written for classroom use, many parts of it are easily adaptable for families.

This *Cuesheet* contains:

- Activities and information to share with young people before and after the performance
- Three reproducible pages:
  - Use Your Imagination
  - Letter to Families
  - Going to the Theater
- A poster-size play map

Pick and choose the questions and activities that best suit your purposes and time constraints.

Quotation marks are used in the activities to indicate one way information and directions can be given to young people. Feel free to paraphrase the information.

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WHAT THE PLAY IS ABOUT

ACTIVITIES BEFORE AND AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

This section of *Cuesheet* alerts young people to characters and events in the play, focuses their attention on the story and major events, dialogue, how theatrical problems are solved, and how props are used in the play. FYI sections provide background information about people and ideas.

GRADES K-6

Synopsis

Before the Performance

Read this synopsis aloud to students as you refer to the poster-size play map on the back of *Cuesheet*.

It is 12,000 years ago in 'the Neolithic time.' Outside the cave of the very first family, the father, mother, and daughter, Taffy, are beginning their daily work. Taffy convinces her father, Aliya (uh-LIE-yuh), to go fishing. At the river, Aliya falls asleep and dreams of a king who lives underwater in a magnificent garden of seaweed.

The Neolithic Age —time period beginning around 10,000 B.C., characterized by the invention of farming and the use of stone tools

"When Aliya awakes he begins to fish, but he breaks the spear he is using. While he tries to fix his spear, a Stranger-Man arrives at the river. Taffy asks the man to get another spear from her mother, but the man does not speak her language. She draws him a picture to explain what she wants him to do. However, Taffy's drawing does not clearly explain her message.

"The Stranger-Man does not understand Taffy's picture, but he leaves with her drawing. Back at the cave, the mother, Maya (MY-uh), has fallen asleep. She dreams of how the wild horse, cow, dog, and cat were tamed to live peacefully with human beings.

"By accident, the Stranger-Man finds Maya at the cave and shows Taffy's drawing to her. Maya thinks that the drawing means that the Stranger-Man has hurt her husband and daughter.

"Angry and worried, Maya and her neighbors make the Stranger-Man lead them to her family. When they find Taffy and her father unharmed, Taffy explains the meaning of her drawing. Finally, they understand one another, become friends, and go fishing together."

GRADES K-6

Adapting Kipling's Stories for the Stage

The Very First Family is a **musical play** based on three of Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories*, woven together and expanded with **calypso** music and lyrics. The three stories are:

- "The Butterfly that Stamped"
- "How The First Letter Was Written"
- "The Cat That Walked by Himself"

In a MUSICAL PLAY, performers sing individually and together. The songs provide information, reveal the inner thoughts of characters, move the action forward, and create mood.

CALYPSO MUSIC — a type of music that originated in the West Indies, especially in Trinidad. It usually has words that tell a story and a beat that makes you want to tap your feet and clap your hands. Some calypso musicians play steel drums, which are instruments made from oil barrels.

In adapting and combining the three stories into one play, playwright Philip Hall made several changes. Although the essential intent of each story remains the same, some characters, settings, and circumstances have been altered.

Before the Performance

You may wish to read one or more of Kipling's three stories to students. If you read at least two of the stories, ask them to predict how the playwright might connect the stories to make a play.

For *The Very First Family*, playwright Philip Hall changed the characters and setting of "The Butterfly that Stamped." Ask young people to imagine how the story might change if the main character in the story were a fish rather than a butterfly.

After the Performance

Discuss changes the students noticed between the original stories and the play. Brainstorm with them for ideas about why the playwright made the choices he did. Have them discuss whether they agree with and/or like those changes.

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GRADES K-6

Look for These Things

This activity alerts young people to the use of objects (props) in the play, extending their understanding of visual aspects of theatrical experience.

Before the Performance

"In the play we're going to see the actors use some objects, called props, which will help us understand and enjoy the story."

Write on the chalkboard or a large piece of paper:

- pottery
- animal skins
- spears
- arrows
- piece of leather
- bamboo flute
- magic ring
- shark's tooth

"How do you think the actors might use these objects in the play?"

After the Performance

"Before we saw the play, we talked about some objects (props) used in the play. Let's look at our list again.

"Which characters used the objects (props)?

"Were you surprised by how any of the objects (props) looked or by how they were used? Why?"

GRADES K-6

Listen for These Lines

This activity familiarizes young people with some of the dialogue in the play.

Before the Performance

"A play is a story that is acted out in front of an audience. A person who writes plays is called a playwright. A playwright writes lines (dialogue) for actors to speak. Here are some lines that playwright Philip Hall wrote for *The Very First Family*." (You may want to read these aloud or write them on the chalkboard.)

After reading the lines with students, determine whether they are familiar with the meanings of the words and lines. Then ask:

"What are some different ways the characters might say each line?" (e.g., loudly, softly, impatiently, excitedly, matter-of-factly, etc.)

Choose one line from the list and have students say it in as many different ways as possible. Then ask:

FYI: Rudyard Kipling

The Very First Family is based on Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories*. Kipling was born in 1865 in Bombay, India, where his father was a sculptor who taught at an art school. Because there was much disease and little medical care in India at that time, Kipling's parents sent him to live in England with another family when he was five years old.

Rudyard was very unhappy because the family treated him badly. To escape his unhappiness, he read and reread certain books. He became a lover of words and stories.

Later, when Kipling was in boarding school, he wrote many letters to his parents in which he enclosed poems he had written. They published the poems printed in a booklet. A newspaper editor in India read the booklet and hired 17-year-old Kipling as a writer. He returned to India and spent seven years writing for newspapers. What he saw and experienced during these years influenced his writing.

Kipling moved to London when he was 24. His stories and poems were published in many magazines and newspapers, and he became well-known.

He married an American woman and had three children. *Just So Stories* were inspired by bedtime stories he told his children. They had to be repeated "just so," or the children made their father go back and fill in the missing words. Kipling called his young listeners "my best beloved." He included this phrase in the written stories.

Kipling won many honors for his writing. He died in 1936 at age 71.

"Which one of the interpretations we've heard do you think is most effective? Why?"

"When we go to see *The Very First Family*, listen carefully for how the actors say the lines."

MAYA
"Fun? How can we have fun?
Don't you see that there's work to do?"

GIRL FISH
"You're only bored because
you don't use your imagination."

ALIYA
"Taffy, please! You make too much noise!
I can't concentrate!"

NARRATOR
"She dreamed of wild animals.
And remember, *all* animals were wild."

CAT
"Hssss! I am the cat who walks by herself, and all places are alike to me."

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GRADES K-6

Problems to Solve

Good audience members are able to appreciate creative solutions that playmakers invent to solve theatrical problems. The following learning activity provides young people with opportunities to consider alternative solutions to theatrical problems.

Before the Performance

"People who put plays together have to be creative problem-solvers. Here are some problems that had to be solved for *The Very First Family*. How would you solve them?

"Remember that you must solve the problems by using music, lights, sound effects, voices, costumes, scenery, and objects (props). Be careful. Your creative solutions must work on the stage."

Record ideas on large sheets of paper. Save students' responses for comparison after the performance.

"**PROBLEM 1:** A character falls asleep and has a dream. That character and others act out the dream. How can you show that the action on stage is a dream?

"**PROBLEM 2:** A scene in the play takes place at the bottom of the ocean. How can you show that the setting and characters are under water?

"**PROBLEM 3:** A fish claims that she can make an underwater palace and garden disappear with a wiggle of her fin. How can you make everything on the stage disappear and then re-appear?

"**PROBLEM 4:** Six actors play 17 characters in *The Very First Family*. (See FYI Theater Conventions) How can an actor show that he or she has become another character quickly?"

After the Performance

"Remember the problems we tried to solve before we went to see *The Very First Family*? (Restate problems 1-4 above.) We shared our solutions before we went to the play. Now let's talk about how the playmakers solved each of the problems. How did our solutions compare with theirs?"

Post the students' solutions and discuss the similarities and differences between theirs and those of the playmakers.

FYI Theater Conventions

An implicit understanding between audience and performer is the agreement to "suspend disbelief," to pretend together that the action is real and is happening for the first time. This agreement is often maintained through the use of theatrical conventions (practices accepted as a part of playmaking).

These theatrical conventions are evident in *The Very First Family*:

- The use of narrators who tell the stories and interact with the characters
- Dream sequences: a character's dream is acted out by the dreamer and other characters
- Performers who play the parts of animals who speak, move, and think like humans
- The use of mime (telling a story with gestures and bodily actions instead of words)
- Performers who play multiple roles in the play, called "doubling," in theater terminology

In this play, six actors play 17 characters:

Actor 1	Actor 2	Actor 3	Actor 4	Actor 5	Actor 6
Narrator	Tribeswoman	Aliya	Maya	Taffy	Stranger-Man
Chief	Cow	King	Queen	Girl Fish	Boy Fish
		Dog	Woman	Cat	Horse
					Baby

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GRADES K-6

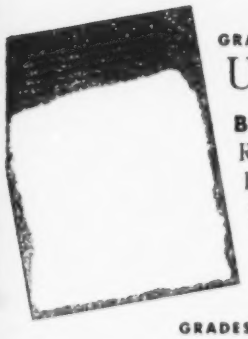
Discussion Questions

After the Performance

These questions help young people recall some of the major events in the play.

"Now that we have seen *The Very First Family*, let's discuss some parts of the play.

- "A conflict in a story happens when one character wants to do something, but the other character doesn't want to do it. At the start of the play, what was the conflict between Taffy and her parents? How was she finally able to get what she wanted? Have you known people who were able to get their parents to stop working and do something enjoyable with them? How did they do it?
- "What was the conflict between the Boy Fish and the Girl Fish? Why did she want to trick him? Have you ever played a trick on someone and gotten away with it? Why did you want to play a trick? How did you feel when you succeeded?
- "What three things did the cat do to make herself a part of the family? Why do you think it was important to the cat that she continue to say, 'I am the cat who walks by herself, and all places are alike to me'?"



GRADES K-6

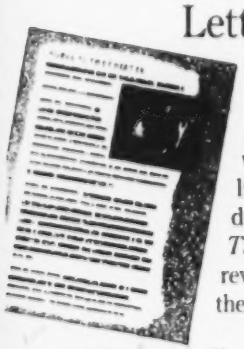
Use Your Imagination

Before the Performance

Reproduce and distribute the Use Your Imagination activity. Read the directions with students and ask them to draw what they imagine an underwater kingdom would look like.

GRADES K-6

Going to the Theater Letter to Families



Before the Performance

These two pages should be reproduced (preferably back-to-back) and sent home with students. The letter provides families with information about their children's attendance at the performance of *The Very First Family* and asks them to review Going to the Theater, the page on theater etiquette, with their children.

GRADES 2-6

Communicating Without Words

This activity allows young people to experience communicating through drawing, an effort that is central to the play.

Before the Performance

"In one scene, the character Taffy draws a picture to communicate with a man who does not speak her language. She makes a drawing to tell him that she wants him to go to her mother and get a spear. This is not easy."

Ask students to try to communicate a simple request through a drawing. Divide students into small groups. Provide each group with a simple message to illustrate. Do not let others overhear or read a group's message. Ask each group to make a drawing that communicates its message. (No written words allowed!)

Here are some suggestions:

- Go to the principal's office and ask for some paper and pencils.
- Ask the teacher next door for a filmstrip projector that our class can use.
- Take this book back to the library.
- Ask the custodian for a broom to sweep up some spilled popcorn.

When the drawings are completed, exchange them with other groups or individuals. Ask students to try to interpret what each drawing means. Later, tell the interpreters the original intent of the drawing.

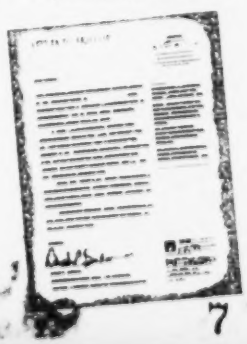
Discuss these questions:

"What parts of the drawing were understood?"

"Which parts were misunderstood?"

"How would written language help communicate the idea?"

"What worked best: words, pictures, or a combination of both?"



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USE YOUR IMAGINATION

In the play *The Very First Family,* a king lives in a beautiful kingdom under the sea. He has everything he wants, but he is still bored. Use your imagination! Draw a picture of a king and his queen who live at the bottom of the ocean in a magnificent garden of seaweed. You might want to include a palace, servants, fish, and jewels.

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GOING TO THE THEATER

When you go to the theater, YOU ARE THE AUDIENCE. The audience is an important part of the performance.

Here are some tips for enjoying yourself:

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE: An USHER will meet your class at the entrance to the theater and direct you to your seats. BATHROOMS are located outside the theater. It is a good idea to use them before the performance. If you must go to the bathroom during the performance, be sure that you leave and return quietly. The lights will dim or go out when the performance is about to begin. At this time the audience becomes very QUIET.

DURING THE PERFORMANCE: The performance has been created just for you. Everyone on stage speaks, moves, or sings for you. The audience LISTENS AND WATCHES carefully. Talking to friends disturbs the performers and other members of the audience. Performers like it when you LAUGH when something is funny, and CRY when something is sad. They also like to hear you CLAP at the end of a performance when they BOW. AFTER THE BOWS, the audience STAYS SEATED until the lights in the theater (house lights) come on. Follow the ushers' DIRECTIONS for leaving the theater.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE: Actors, dancers, and musicians like to hear from their audiences. WRITE and let them know your thoughts about the performance. Write to: *Cuesheet/The Very First Family*, The Kennedy Center Education Department, The Kennedy Center, Washington, DC 20566.

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LETTER TO FAMILIES

The Kennedy Center

JAMES D. WOLFENSOHN, CHAIRMAN

LAWRENCE J. WILKER, PRESIDENT

DEREK E. GORDON, ASSOCIATE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Dear Family:

Your child will be attending the Kennedy Center production of *The Very First Family* on _____ at the Kennedy Center. This production is a musical play based on Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories,* woven together and expanded with calypso music and lyrics.

A Stone Age family and their neighbors bring Kipling's stories "How the First Letter was Written," "The Cat That Walked By Herself," and "The Butterfly That Stamped" to life. Audiences will experience a humorous mix of stories and music in this newly commissioned play, produced by the Coterie Theatre of Kansas City, Mo., and developed with the Kennedy Center.

Please read "Going to the Theater" (on the reverse of this letter) with your child. After the performance, ask your child about favorite stories, songs, costumes, characters, and memorable moments.

We hope that your child enjoys the performance and will share some thoughts with you about the play and the trip to the Kennedy Center.

Sincerely,

Derek E. Gordon

Derek E. Gordon
Associate Managing Director for Education
The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

RESOURCES

Rudyard Kipling, O Beloved Kids by Elliot L. Gilbert. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1983.

Kipling, Storyteller of East and West by Gloria Kamen. New York: Atheneum, 1985. This juvenile biography may be read by or to students.

Just So Stories by Rudyard Kipling, with woodcuts by David Frampton. New York: Harper Collins, 1991.

Just So Stories, a sound recording narrated by Jack Nicholson. Stanford, CA: Windham Hill, 1987.

NOTES FROM YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER:

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